Written evidence submitted by Carers UK

About Carers UK

1. Carers UK is a charity set up to help the 6.5 million people in the UK who care, unpaid, for family or friends. At some point in our lives every one of us will either need care or be involved in looking after an older relative, a sick friend or a disabled family member. Whilst caring is part and parcel of life, without the right support the personal costs can be high and caring can affect your job, your health and your finances.

2. Carers UK is a membership organisation of carers, run by carers, for carers. We have 17,000 members and a reach of many more. We provide information and advice about caring alongside practical and emotional support for carers. Carers UK also campaigns to make life better for carers and influences policy makers, employers and service providers, to help them improve carers' lives.

3. Carers UK’s advice and information services answer around 20,000 queries from carers and professionals every year. Our website is viewed by over 100,000 people every month, 27,000 subscribe to our monthly email newsletters, and the combined reach of our online communities and social networks exceeds 38,000. We’re in regular contact with around 1,500 local organisations, including many run by carers, who are in touch with around 950,000 carers.

4. Carers UK has offices in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Summary

5. Increasing demand for care, coupled with reduced local authority social care support, means that more people are providing unpaid care than ever before.

6. Women, especially over the age of 40, are more likely to take on caring responsibilities than men, indeed one in four women aged 50-64 is providing care for an older, ill or disabled loved one\(^1\). Women are also more likely to be ‘sandwich carers’ – caring for both a young child and an elderly parent.

\(^1\) Census 2011
7. Juggling the demands of working and caring can be very difficult. A lack of carer friendly workplace polices, such as paid care leave and flexible working, and sufficient, high quality social care services mean that an increasing numbers of employees, more often than not women, are forced to give up work at the peak of their careers. This has a huge impact on women’s career progression, and long term financial security, as well as the wider economy.

Women and Caring

8. The bulk of care is and has always been provided within families. Demand for unpaid care provided by families and carers is on the increase. Since 2001, the carer population has grown by 16.5% to 6.5 million; vastly outstripping the growth of the general population during this same period (6.2%)\(^2\). The value of the care provided by unpaid carers in the UK each year is £132bn\(^3\).

9. Not only are more people caring, but they are caring for longer. Since 2001, the number of people providing 20-49 hours of care a week has increased by 43% and those providing 50 hours of care or more a week has increased by a third (33%)\(^4\).

10. The majority of carers are women. Almost 6 in 10 (58%) of carers at the last Census (2011) were women. **Caring falls particularly on women in their 40s, 50s and 60s, with 1 in 4 women aged 50-54 having caring responsibilities for older or disabled loved ones, compared to 1 in 6 men\(^5\).**

11. Women are also overrepresented in those providing ‘round the clock’ care, with 60% of those caring for over 50 hours a week being female\(^6\).

12. As a result of women’s overrepresentation amongst carers, particularly those aged over 40, reductions in practical and financial support for carers and rising demand for unpaid care and support are

\(^2\) Carers UK (2015) Valuing Carers  
\(^3\) Ibid.  
\(^4\) Ibid.  
\(^5\) Census 2011  
\(^6\) NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care (2010) Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10
likely to have a disproportionate effect on women and their employment prospects.

**Sandwich caring**

13. Increasingly parents are combining looking after young children with caring for older or disabled loved ones. Research from YouGov suggests that over 2.4 million people are already combining raising children with caring for older parents.\(^7\) This is often called ‘sandwich caring’ or ‘dual caring’.

14. Research shows that women are more likely than men to be sandwich carers\(^8\) and the peak age for sandwich caring is 40-49, slightly younger than the peak age for caring. However the impact on the ability to work is likely to mean that the retirement income of this group will be significantly affected.

Impact of caring on women in the workplace

15. The peak age of caring often coincides with the peak of an individual’s career in their 40s- 60s. National opinion polling for Carers UK’s Caring & Family Finances Inquiry showed that middle-aged people with caring responsibilities were more likely than carers of other ages to have given up work, reduced working hours and see a negative impact on their work, like stress and tiredness. **In particular, women aged 45-54 were more than twice as likely as other carers to have reduced working hours as a result of caring responsibilities.**\(^9\)

16. Carers UK research on sandwich carers and the workplace\(^10\) – showed that women were four times more likely than men to have given up work because of multiple caring responsibilities.

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\(^7\) YouGov Poll April 2012 (2012) YouGov and Engage Mutual Survey - polling a GB representative sample of 1,008 people aged 45-60 who had elderly parents and 500 people aged over 65 who had adult children.


\(^9\) Employers for Carers and Carers UK (2015) Caring and isolation in the workplace

\(^10\) Carers UK & Employers for Carers (2012) Sandwich Caring Combining childcare with caring for older or disabled relatives
17. Beyond hours worked or ability to work at all, caring also has an impact on labour mobility (with families unable to move away from ageing parents or disabled loved ones, or unwilling to move as a family for fear of disrupting care services) and on career progression. For example a third (34 per cent) of carers responding to a 2013 Carers Week survey had missed out on the chance of a promotion, and Census data indicates that carers of both genders, but particularly female carers, are more likely to be in elementary occupations – often taking the most local job possible to making juggling work and care possible.

18. When caring has an impact on work it can have long term consequences for savings, pensions contributions and the length of working lives. Carers who have given up work to care spend, on average 5 years out of the workforce with many finding themselves in their 50s and 60s having spent years out of the workforce, struggling to retrain and return to work at all.

Impact of caring on employers and the economy

19. Around half of the UK’s carers juggle work with caring for an ill, frail or disabled friend or family member. This means that around 1 in 9 employees in any workplace is juggling paid work with care.

20. Research has demonstrated that the point at which caring begins to have a significant impact on carers’ ability to work is when 20 hours or more of care is provided, with some analysis indicating that the tipping point may be even lower, at 10 hours of care provision.

21. The evidence is that carers give up work to care. Polling carried out by YouGov on behalf of Carers UK suggests that over 2 million people have given up work at some point to care for loved ones and 3 million have reduced working hours. The Corporate Leadership Council

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11 Prepared to Care? (2013) Carers Week
13 Carers UK Out of Pocket (2007)
14 Census 2011
15 King & Pickard (2012) ‘When is a carer’s employment at risk? Longitudinal analysis of unpaid care and employment in midlife in England’ Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU), London School of Economics (LSE), London, UK
estimates that the cumulative costs to employers of an employee leaving work are equal to an employee’s last salary, while Hay Group suggests it could cost anywhere from 50-150% of their salary\(^\text{17}\). This then impacts on the UK’s global competitiveness with every skilled worker lost to business. There are further negative implications for private pensions provision, the impact on the health of those caring and the long term state benefits bill – with the combined annual cost estimated to be around £5.3 billion loss to the economy in lost tax revenue and additional benefits costs\(^\text{18}\).

Workplace solutions for women caring

22. Alongside our business forum, Employers for Carers, Carers UK has described investing in support for carers as a win-win-win for families, business and the economy. As families are able to remain more resilient and healthy as they juggle caring with work, businesses are able to retain workers whose peak age for caring coincides with the peak of their skills and experience, and the economy reaps the benefits of greater female workforce participation, families ability to work for longer and the economic benefits of a vibrant, growing care market.

What actions would be most effective in improving recruitment, retention and re-training for women aged over 40?

23. Development/promotion of good practice in the workplace by employers and business organisations. This can range from measures such as flexible working (both formal and informal arrangements), flexible leave arrangements for caring (including paid leave and longer periods of unpaid leave), workplace age and skills audits, specific carers policies, health and wellbeing programmes, age diversity and carer awareness training and e-learning programmes for managers and staff, information sessions on caring issues and specific health conditions and signposting to external sources of advice, practical support from employee assistance programmes/welfare schemes, mentoring schemes, staff networks, engagement and partnerships with


\(^{17}\) HM Government, Carers UK & Employers for Carers (2013) Supporting working carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy

\(^{18}\) Age UK (2012) Care crisis wipes over £5.3 billion from the economy
external forums such as Employers for Carers, Opportunity Now, Business Disability Forum etc

24. **Review carers’ rights within the workplace with a view to introducing a new right to paid care leave.** There is evidence to show that the current impact of staff turnover, absenteeism and stress as a result of juggling work with caring is already having a huge impact on business could be costing UK businesses over £3.5 billion every year\(^\text{19}\). Greater flexibility and support for those juggling work and care could significantly reduce these costs, save money and increase productivity.

Some businesses have introduced this already so the impact to some would be low. Depending on the introduction of the policy, the costs would be relative. Hand in hand with this work would be additional work to promote positive work by fora such as the Employers for Carers forum – helping businesses to support staff and increase productivity\(^\text{20}\).

25. **Return to work strategy and programme for carers** - a co-ordinated strategy for carers and former carers driven through the new Carers Strategy that could be developed to support carers. This might include a National Insurance holiday for employers who employ a carer or former carer who has been out of work for some time, mirroring similar measures for disabled people. We would also like to see a fuller development of a “returnships” programme for older workers who need to return to the labour market after a period of caring, building on the support provided by some employers for women returners with childcare responsibilities.

26. **Funded development of new work opportunities for carers – self-employment.** Evidence from Carers UK’s State of Caring survey shows a slightly higher than average rate of self-employment amongst carers. The latest Census also reveals that the number of women in self-employment is increasing at a faster rate than the number of men (although men still dominate self employment) Anecdotal evidence from return to work providers also suggests that self-employment is more popular amongst carers who need to continue caring. One local carers’ organisation has developed a new work stream based around self-employment and the majority of carers who have started the work

\(^{19}\) Carers UK (2014) Care Leave, Impact on Business
\(^{20}\) [www.employersforcarers.org](http://www.employersforcarers.org)
and set up new micro businesses have been caring for some time and many have not worked for years. Surrey and North Somerset Councils are both piloting schemes to support carers to set up in self-employment. North Somerset are part of the Government funded supporting carers in employment pilot. This could be developed as a grant based learning and development network funded by a limited funding pot, with rolling out of new policy and local grants where early success is demonstrated.

27. **Recognise social care as a growth sector which provides conditions for employment underpinning economic strategy and addressing our demographic change.** Treating social care as a growth market that looks at investing in new employment opportunities reduces negative health outcomes, and increases the likelihood that carers, especially women, will be able to continue to juggle their work and family responsibilities. Investing in care does not replace family care, but makes it more likely that family will be able to continue to be part of the labour market, generate revenue and secure long term financial security for themselves.

Of those carers we surveyed who had given up work or retired early to care the majority of carers replying to our survey (62%) said it was the stress of juggling everything that meant they gave up work but over a third (35%) of them said that the care services they needed to continue to work and care were not suitable or were too expensive\(^{21}\).

Despite the recently introduced duty on local authorities to shape the care market in their area, this area of activity remains under-developed and at best looks only at local commissioning and procurement rather than embracing the wider potential for local growth of stimulating a care market.

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\(^{21}\) Carers UK (2014) State of Caring Report